

# Fabric Glossary

Get to know all the different types of fabric & what they're used for.



## A

### [Anti-Pill Plush Fleece](#)

fleece processed in a way that reduces pilling; the fibers are often cut shorter than ordinary fleece; typically used for apparel, home decor & crafts

### [Artist Canvas](#)

cotton duck canvas specially treated with gesso which serves as a primer for painting; used primarily as painter's canvas. Can also be used for painted dresses, plant covers, pillows, totes & play forts

### [Athleisure](#)

fabric designed to create comfortable, casual clothing; good for exercise and everyday wear

### [Awning](#)

durable fabric for outdoor use that provides mold resistance, water repellence and UV protection; typically used to cover outdoor living spaces

## B

### Batik

made by stamping a design on fabric in wax so it rejects the dye. It can be dyed first, stamped, dyed again, then wax removed to make unique, multicolored patterns; used for quilting & apparel

### Batiste

thin, lightweight, sheer cotton fabric; used for light summer clothing & traditional handkerchiefs. Also good for sheers

### Batting

commonly used as stuffing for quilts, it can vary widely in thickness & content; sold pre-measured & by-the-yard

### Blackout

foam-backed, opaque fabric used to block light; typically used for drapery

### Blizzard

thick fleece, brushed for extra softness; also known as polar fleece; great for no-sew blankets

### Bottom Weight

heavier weight fabrics, like twill or denim; fabric weight refers to denseness of weave; usually used for pants, skirts & jackets

## **Broadcloth**

tightly-woven cotton fabric with a dense, smooth texture & glossy finish; used for apparel, quilting & crafts

## **Brocade**

rich, elaborate fabrics, usually silk, with raised designs, typically woven with gold or silver threads; used for apparel & home decor

## **Brushed Cotton**

thicker woven fabric that is brushed, creating a soft hand; great for apparel, accessories and home decor

## **Buckram**

woven stabilizer made from cotton fibers and soaked in a starch-like substance to become stiff; often used for bookbinding and hat-making but also used to lend support and structure to apparel and handbags

## **Bunting**

light, loosely woven cloth used for festive decorations (flags, ribbons, banners); also, the word to describe these decorations

## **Burlap**

plain, coarse, heavyweight fabric made with 100% natural jute fiber; used for home decor & crafting, carpet backing & grain sacks

# C

## Calico

light cotton with a print on only one side of the fabric; commonly used for dresses, aprons & quilts

## Canvas

extremely durable, plain weave fabric; also known as a utility fabric; used for home decor & utility projects

## Cargo Netting

strong, large-weave netting; good for breathable picnic & beach totes; often used in cars to keep cargo from shifting

## Chalkboard

lightweight, flexible vinyl that can be used as a chalkboard; also known as blackboard fabric; great for crafting & home decor, especially in kids' rooms

## Chambray

smooth, lightweight apparel fabric with a characteristic weaving of colored yarn with white yarn; great for tops & dresses

## Chantilly Lace

scallop-edged lace, often woven with designs of scrolls, vases or flowers, which are outlined by thick cords; commonly used as trimming for bridal gowns & veils

## **Charmeuse**

soft, smooth, lightweight dress & blouse fabric, woven from silk or polyester, with a satin-like finish. May or may not have spandex added for stretch

## **Cheesecloth**

loose-woven, soft fabric; typically undyed and used in cooking & cheese making

## **Chenille**

tufted & velvety cord or yarn, used to make sweaters, blankets, pillows & upholstery

## **Chiffon**

very light, sheer fabric made from silk, nylon, or polyester; typically used for scarves & flowing dresses

## **Color-Changing Vinyl**

water resistant, but changes color with water; perfect for kids' raincoats & umbrellas. Can also be used for outdoor bean bags, ottomans or sandbox covers.

## **Corduroy**

sturdy cotton fabric with soft, vertical, velvety ridges, called cords; used for clothing & home decor

## **Cork**

real cork, backed by a thin layer of fabric, this is thin enough to use with a sewing machine, yet durable and pliable; ideal for making handbags and wallets; all-natural and environmentally-friendly

## Cosplay

term for a range of colorful, vivid fabrics used to create elaborate costumes

## Cotton

a natural, plain-weave fabric with soft fibers known for its breathability; used in clothing, home decor & crafts

## Crepe

lightweight woven or knitted fabric, with a distinctive crisp, pebbled appearance; primarily used for clothing

## Crinoline

stiffened, open-weave fabric; once made of horsehair & linen and used for petticoats and in millinery; still used to make stiff underskirts for costumes & evening/ball gowns

## D

## Damask

rich, heavy fabric with a reversible weave; typically used for upholstery & home decor

## **Denim**

extremely sturdy cotton twill fabric, usually woven from blue & white threads; used for clothing, such as jeans, overalls and other apparel. Also used for home decor projects like pillows, bedding, poufs and wall decor

## **Diaper Cloth**

100% cotton, easy to care for and durable for repeated washings; soft and safe for babies' skin

## **Double Cloth**

two distinct fabrics connected at regular intervals in the weave to form a two-layered cloth; commonly used for coats, blankets, furnishings & reversible clothing

## **Drill (Chino)**

extremely durable cotton fabric with a strong diagonal weave; typically used for khakis, sneakers, military uniforms

## **Duck**

strong, durable & versatile cotton fabric, lighter than standard canvas or sailcloth; popular for workwear & camping gear

## **Dupioni**

crisp, silk fabric with irregular slubs; often used in bridal & formal wear; suitable for upholstery & other home décor, such as drapes/curtains

## E

### Embroidered

any fabric that's embellished with embroidery (stitched, decorative designs that may also incorporate other materials such as pearls, beads, and sequins); great for embellishing clothing & home decor

### Eyelet

fabric designed with patterned cut-outs, often bordered with stitching to keep prevent the edges from unraveling; typically used for apparel

## F

### Fabric Quarters

popular way for quilters to buy fabric; one yard of fabric is cut down into 18 "x 21" pieces

### Faux or Fake Fur

slang term for synthetic materials made to look as if made from animal pelts; also known as fun fur; used for apparel, home decor & crafts

### **Faux or Fake Leather**

term used to describe artificial or synthetic leathers; used for apparel, home decor & crafts

### Felt

non-woven material made by joining fibers using heat, moisture & pressure; great for crafting & appliques

## **Flannel**

cotton, wool or synthetic fabric brushed on both sides for softness; perfect for shirts & dresses

## **Flannel Back Satin**

polyester satin fabric strengthened with a flannel backing for use in upholstery & home decor projects

## **Flannel Shirtings**

flannel fabrics used for casual shirts; most often brushed twill or brushed poplin

## **Fleece**

umbrella term for a range of warm, soft materials made from natural or synthetic fibers; typically used to make warm clothing & accessories

## **French Terry**

knit jersey with loops on one side, designed to absorb water; great for swimsuit coverups

## **Fur**

usually woven or knitted from rayon, wool or cotton, finer than faux fur; made with a pile that is dyed & finished to resemble an animal's fur; used for apparel, home decor & crafts

## G

### Gabardine

twill fabric with a highly durable, compact weave; wool gabardine is used year-round for classic business suiting

### Gauze

thin, sheer fabric with loose, open weave; great for apparel, home decor & crafting

### Gingham

lightweight, yarn-dyed woven fabric, usually cotton, with a small check or plaid pattern; typically used for apparel

### Grip-Stop

100% cotton fabric with a grip backing to reduce slippage; often used on the back of rugs, slippers & pajama feet

## H

### Headliner

typically used for the interior roof of vehicles, headliner has a face fabric with a nonwoven or foam backing

### Herringbone

V-shaped pattern usually wool; one of the most popular fabrics for suits and outerwear

## Houndstooth

a large checked pattern with notched corners suggestive of a canine tooth; typically used in cloth for jackets and suits

I

## Insul-bright

insulating utility fabric used to provide insulation to maintain cold temperatures in lunch or grocery bags as well as protection against heat transference, as around water heaters & in potholders

## Interfacing

a stabilizing material, typically used between two layers of fabric; often found in collars & facings; can be sewn in or fusible

## Interlock Knit

double-sided, smooth, stretchable fabric; typically twice as thick as standard jersey; typically used for apparel

## Ironing Board Cover

Woven of 100% cotton with a unique aluminized coating, this fabric gives your ironing board a smooth, resilient, heat-resistant surface and can be wiped clean with a damp cloth; also used for potholders, oven mitts and casserole carriers; comes quilted and un-quilted

J

## Jacquard

fabric with an elaborate pattern incorporated directly into the weave rather than printed onto its surface; great for dressy apparel

## Jersey Knit

stretchable, lightweight fabric, usually cotton or cotton/synthetic blend. Jersey knits have a visible “right side” & “wrong side”; commonly used for T-shirts, pajamas, dresses & other apparel

## Jute

natural fiber derived from plants; the long, soft and shiny fibers are spun into coarse, strong threads; used for making twine and rope or woven into sacking or matting.

## K

### Knit

umbrella term for a range of fabrics made from one continuous, interlacing fiber, rather than the two-part weave of other fabrics; valued in apparel manufacture for its stretchability & versatility

## L

### Lace

delicate fabric made when yarn or thread is woven in a decorative, open, weblike pattern; used in apparel, particularly bridal & as trim, as well as curtains/drapes & other decor

### Lamé

delicate fabric woven with silver or gold threads; primarily for limited-use items, like theatrical costumes & evening wear

### Laminated

a very thin layer of polyurethane film on the face of the fabric, making it waterproof; perfect for tablecloths

### **Lawn**

light, crisp cloth made of cotton or linen; used in spring/summer apparel

### Linen

woven from flax, linen is often lightweight and favored for its coolness in hot weather. Also used for home decor projects

### Lining

lining is an inner layer of fabric added to garments or accessories; used to make the garment less see-through, improves garment structure and conceals seams, padding, interfacing, etc.

## **M**

### **Madras**

lightweight cotton fabric with a brightly-colored, distinctive plaid or checkered pattern; used for casual clothing and home decor projects

## **Mesh**

characterized by a net-like, open weave; found in lace, netting, tulle, as well as many utility fabrics; used for apparel, crafts & utility projects

## **Micro-Fleece**

particularly soft fleece, perfect for baby blankets & accessories, cold-weather clothing & winter wear

## **Minky**

super soft, plush fabric which resembles real mink & can be as soft as cashmere; often used for baby blankets, plush toys

## **Moisture-Wicking**

characterized by ability to pull perspiration from the body to the exterior of the fabric where it can evaporate more easily; typically made from polyester blends which don't retain moisture like natural fabrics; great for activewear

## **Moleskin**

heavyweight cotton with a soft pile on one side of the fabric; similar to felt or chamois in feel, but equal to denim in durability; typically used in clothing

## **Monk's Cloth**

coarse, heavyweight cotton often used for draperies, decor & craft projects

## **Mosquito Netting**

strong thread or cord worked into an open, meshed fabric; used as protection against insects and for catching fish, birds or animals. Can also be used for canopies

## **Muslin**

inexpensive, natural or bleached cotton fabric; often used for burping cloths & film/photographic backdrops. Great “test” fabric for making garments, pattern making, and other sewing projects

## **Mylar Vinyl**

silver mirror-like fabric used to maintain temperature & reflect heat away; used in coolers, lunch bags, pizza bags and heat-reflective windshield blocks

# N

## **Neoprene**

made of synthetic rubber material that is heat & cold resistant; used for functional scuba gear, apparel, accessories and lunch bags/coolers

## **Netting**

threads are crossed so that their intersections are knotted or looped, forming a geometrically shaped mesh; used for accenting or lining special occasion apparel. Can also be used to protect plants from insects

## **Novelty Vinyl**

has features like iridescence, glitter & metallics; primarily used for crafting. Can also be used for totes & purses

## **Nylon**

very strong and elastic synthetic fibers used to make fabrics, plastics, molded products

## **O**

### **Oil Cloth**

cotton fabric coated with a waterproof finish; commonly used for raincoats, luggage, bibs

### **Organdy**

sheer, crisp & delicate, similar to organza; typically made of spun cotton yarn

### **Organza**

equally sheer, crisp & delicate as organdy, but made of filament yarn; typically polyester, rayon or silk; typically used for apparel

### **Osnaburg**

coarse, heavy cotton; used for furnishings and bags

### **Outdoor fabric**

fabric designed to withstand outdoor elements; properties can include hundreds of hours of UV exposure, water repellence or resistance, and durability; used for outdoor cushions, pillows & more

## P

### Panne Velvet

lightweight velvet fabric in which the pile is flattened in one direction by a roller press, which gives it its shine; used for apparel

### Performance

built for active wear; fabric can include enhancements such as sun protection & moisture wicking

### Pet/Mesh Screening

multi-use vinyl mesh screen fabric; often used as an insect/pet barrier

### Pleather

a plastic fabric made to look like leather (see also "Faux Leather"); used for apparel, home decor & crafts

### Plisse

cotton fabric with a crinkled or puckered texture; found in nightgowns, summer shirts

## **Polyester**

defined by the polymer fibers it is made from; popular as an apparel fabric since it is durable, wrinkle- & stretch-resistant, easily dyed, and requires no ironing or special cleaning

## **Ponte**

a thick, double knit fabric; heavier weight perfect for more structured garments; with the forgiveness of a knit and versatility of a woven

## **Poplin**

strong fabric with a fine rib weave; typically used for sportswear, semi-casual wear, pajamas, decorative fabric

## **Pre-cut fabric**

fabric that is sold in individual cuts; packaging will communicate specific size; great for quilting & crafts

## **Protective Flannel**

100% cotton with a plastic film between two layers of flannel to create a liquidproof barrier. Ideal for bed-wetting problems, it absorbs fluid quickly from the surface and protects sensitive skin from moisture and staining

## **Q**

## **Quilted Fabric**

double-faced, pre-quilted fabric has a layer of batting between two layers of fabric with a quilted pattern; commonly used for quilts, quilted bedding, table runners & handbags

## Quilters Flannel

heavier weight flannel that is used in quilting; specifically to back quilts

## R

### Reusable Bag

polypropylene fabric is a nonwoven textile that does not absorb moisture; lightweight with thermal conductivity; perfect for cold weather wear, grocery bags & lunch bags

## Rib Knit

term for knit fabric with vertical rows that intermesh alternatively on the front & back of fabric; known for shape retention & stretchability; typically used for apparel

## Ripstop

100% nylon strong, woven utility fabric; tear & abrasion resistant; often used for outdoor flags, banners, backpacks, duffel bags, camping tents

## S

### Sailcloth

unique canvas fabric that can be woven from a variety of natural or synthetic fibers to make a strong fabric for use in sail construction

## Sateen

soft, smooth, often cotton, with a subtle luster; commonly used for draperies & upholstery

## Satin

lustrous, glossy surface and a dull back; drapability depends on fiber content; silk & rayon satins are best for apparel

## Scuba

three-layer fabric that is lighter weight than regular neoprene, with insulating properties that keep items hot or cold; it will not fray, has an extremely smooth finish and more drapability than regular neoprene; great for apparel, lunch totes & beverage insulators. Can also be used to give body to apparel

## Seersucker

light cotton fabric with alternating smooth & puckered striped or checkered designs; needs no ironing, commonly used for summer clothes

## Sequin

a small, shiny disk sewn as one of many onto fabric for decoration and texture; perfect for dressy apparel

## Shag Microfiber

made from very small fibers that trap lint & dust and also absorb water; used for dusting cloths, bath mats & rugs

## **Sheer**

made using thin thread or low density knit, resulting in a semi-transparent, lightweight fabric with great drape; used in apparel and home decor for drapery

## **Shirting**

fine cotton used to make shirts, typically dress & button-down work shirts; can be poplin, broadcloth, twill, chambray, denim, oxford or linen

## **Silk**

strong, lustrous fiber made from processing the cocoons of silkworm larvae; typically used in apparel fabrics

## **Silvertex**

100% cotton; used for polishing silver

## **Sling Chair**

a vinyl coated woven fabric used for outdoor seating with a wide enough weave to allow for water to drain through the fabric, allowing for an easy clean and quick dry

## **Spacer**

breathable honeycomb-type fabric that allows air to travel both ways through fabric; popular in tennis shoes, baseball caps & mattress covers to encourage airflow and minimize odor. Can also be used for apparel

## **Spandex**

a strong, elastic fabric made from synthetic fibers; perfect for activewear

## **Speaker Cloth**

lightweight, black fabric that allows sound to pass through, but keeps dust and contaminates from settling on the speaker's woofer

## **Suede**

leather with the flesh side rubbed to create a velvety nap; used for apparel, home decor & crafts

## **Suiting**

fabric used for the construction & tailoring of suits, trousers, jackets & skirts

## **Swaddle Cloth**

soft, lightweight puckered cotton muslin commonly used to create baby blankets and accessories

## **Sweater Knit**

knitted fabric giving the appearance of a knit sweater

T

## **Taffeta**

rich, crisp, ribbed fabric; commonly used for formalwear

### **Terry Cloth**

fabric with uncut loops on both sides that absorbs water effectively; typically used for towels

### **Thermal Knit**

waffle- or honeycomb-textured weave traps warm air between the yarns, making it an effective insulator; perfect for cold-weather wear

### **Ticking**

a very strong, striped twill; typically used to cover pillows, mattresses & box springs. Can also be used for work wear, such as overalls

### **Tulle**

light net material, typically used for delicate clothing such as veils and wedding/evening dresses

### **Turf**

synthetic fibers made to look like grass; used for indoor 3-season rooms and shoe mats. Can also be used for photo backdrops, home decor accents, fairy gardens & playscapes

### **Twill**

twill refers to both a weave of parallel, diagonal ridges & a fabric recognizable by that weave; sturdy construction makes it effective for upholstery & work clothing, such as denim

## **U**

### **Underlining**

woven fabric for lining the bottom of furniture to protect from dust and dirt

### **Upholstery**

a range of fabrics of various weights used for home décor, typically built for heavy wear & long use

### **Utility**

general term used for fabrics built for heavy-duty use; performance fabrics, vinyl, burlap, duck canvas, ripstop, etc

## **V**

### **Velour**

velvet-like knit fabric with a short pile & no luster; used in apparel, home décor and car seat covers

### **Velvet**

soft, smooth, luxurious woven fabric with a deep luster & a thick, short pile; often used in high-end apparel, upholstery & drapes

### **Velveteen**

made to resemble velvet, this is a stiffer cotton woven fabric without velvet's luster or fine drap; typically used for apparel

## Vinyl

thick fabric made of synthetic materials which can be used for a variety of projects including decor, utility, accessories and apparel

## Voile

lightly crisp, semi-sheer, smooth woven fabric; used for clothing, curtains & soft furnishings

### Fabric Glossary

There are thousands of different types of fabric. What do they all mean? What are the different types of fabric? What can different types of fabric be used for? This page is here to help you through all of those questions. This fabric glossary can be helpful to beginners who are just learning how to sew, have just bought their first sewing machine, are working on their first [sewing project](#) all the way to experts if you just need a refresher for your current advanced project!

Knowing what type of fabric to buy for your project is very important, and understanding what that fabric type is traditionally used for or how it is made can help you learn how to make other similar projects, or find use cases for your unused fabric you have laying around the house! Regardless of fabric type, from [cotton prints](#), to [muslin fabric by the yard](#), all the way to [foam](#) and [interfacing](#), JOANN has you covered, we make sure that we have all the essentials for your sewing project.

Learning what different types of fabric are can open up so many new ideas to spark even more creativity in your life. While a glossary isn't very inspiring, we have the [projects, inspiration, and digital classes](#) to make up for it! Learning the sewing verbiage, and fabric types will only enhance your creativity to make sure you are comfortable with the fabric you are buying depending on what project you are working on next!